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Craig Staff

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AFTER MODERNIST PAINTING


The History of a Contemporary Practice



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Craig Staff : After Modernist Painting: The History of a Contemporary Practice (International Library of Modern and Contemporary Art) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised After Modernist Painting: The History of a Contemporary Practice (International Library of Modern and Contemporary Art):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Curious EnquiryBy Storyboard123With all due respect to

individual opinion I find Seer's review somewhat disingenuous to this book and feel it should not be the sole given response to this work; personally I find the tone somewhat angry rather than helpful. In terms of false premises, this book does indeed start with a Greenbergian premise but that does not make it false. A premise is simply a place to start, a provocation or an incitement in which to follow or to argue. Any utterance, be it artistic or otherwise, needs a premise to contextualise its suggestion. The error in Seer's review is that, by no means does this book suggest that 'all art' is spurned from Greenberg's claims. This book runs counter to claims of 'all art' and seeks to explore diversity, particularly amongst activities around painting. Furthermore within its treatment of painting, somewhat uniquely and refreshingly, the book does not ascribe this to a linear history but engages with the much more labile occurrences of painterly propositions; the multiplicity of histories. In this way it raises awareness and insight into some curious and beautiful acts of painting and its expanded field that often fall beyond the purview of the standard 'history of painting' books. Greenberg within this book is used (and acknowledged) as one possible device, or point of departure, for seeking thoughtful attendance to, what is evermore becoming a contested and complex field. In terms of criticality, the way this book maps the topology of painting through propositions, rather than A begets B, is the 'intellectual substance' or 'intellectual content' (should the two be divisible). Through the very appreciation of the diverse propositions that painting becomes entangled with, as one reads the book one is introduced to the lay lines, like myriad of flex, that run through its discourse; not only vertically from past to present but also across its horizontal axis and through every degree between. Within this book the reader is offered the opportunity to look behind painting, alongside painting, to see how its ideas coalesce or rub and furnish painting practice with new ever new centrifugal premises. The way the book succeeds in generating a considered and approachable discussion of the apparently heterogeneous is a wonderful achievement. Anyone who knows anything about art (Seer) will know that it is not art as singular entity but is art(s) as multifarious definitions, concerns and approaches and to see how given instances of painting collide to push and press the mediums remit is a rewarding read. In summation I would offer that this book does not offer the weighty claims that Seer's review condemns it for; it does not purport to underscore all painting let alone all art. In its discussion of propositions, trajectories and ideas that are infused with painting this book sets itself out as a proposition. It is an offer, an elucidation, a suggestion of one way in which one can begin to approach a medium that is much more than simply its canon. As it begins with a premise it ends with a premise; that the reader may build upon the inherent ideas to create their own propositions around painting, to explore the full scope and diversity that no book could capture. As for being 'left in the dark' (Seer) I don't think the curiosities of art will ever be fully illuminated but maybe with this book in hand we have a torch to help guide us on our way. 2 of 7 people found the following review helpful. **Garbage** By Seer This book is junk, not worth the paper it is written on. It's empty of any kind of intellectual substance, devoid of intellectual content, no critique, it starts from a false premise, that art is about what Clement Greenberg said it was about and then just lists what this person did and then what this person did, full of pointless biographical stuff, like this artist lived on this street and then they moved to another street, no kidding. Anyone who knows anything about art will think it's a joke, anyone who knows nothing about art, will be left in the dark.

Since the publication of Clement Greenberg's 'Modernist Painting' in 1960, the status of painting and its continued legitimacy as a medium has been repeatedly placed under question. As such, painting has had to continually redefine its own parameters and re-negotiate for itself a critical position within a broader, more discursive set of discourses. Taking the American art critic's text as a point of departure, *After Modernist Painting* will be both a historical survey and a critical re-evaluation of the contested and contingent nature of the medium of painting over the last 50 years. Presenting the first critical account of painting, rather than art generally, this book provides a timely exploration of what has remained a persistent and protean medium. Craig Staff focuses on certain developments including the relationship of painting to Conceptual Art and Minimalism, the pronouncement of its alleged death, its response to Installation Art's foregrounding of site, how it was able to interpret ideas around appropriation, simulation and hybridity and how today it can be understood as both imaging and imagining the digital. *After Modernist Painting* is an invaluable resource for those seeking to understand the themes and issues that have pertained to painting within the context of postmodernism and contemporary artistic practice.

'While painting, as a practice, appears now in a host of widespread plural guises and contexts, attempts to theorise its global terrain have generally been avoided of late. Craig Staff's timely interrogation of the practice does not shirk this responsibility... For those who want a highly informed and erudite view of this unstable and ever-evolving landscape, this is essential reading.' David Ryan, Reader in Fine Art, Anglia Ruskin University 'The book's phenomenal achievement is to steadily guide the reader through a multitude of competing theories and debates around what painting is, whilst being grounded in the diverse practices of individual artists as they speculatively push at the frontiers of what painting might become.' Dan Hays, artist About the Author Craig Staff is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art

at the University of Northampton an artist and author of *Modernist Painting and Materiality* (2011)